

Cemetery and War Memorial Sub-Committee Meeting Wednesday 1st November 2017

PRESENT: Cllr Andy Gill (Chair), Cllr Angie Scott, Cllr Jennifer McGee

David Hunt (NCC Neighbourhood Services Area Manager for the West), Geoff Cairns (Senior NEAT Team Leader for the West)

1. No apologies for absence

2. Declarations of Interest NONE

3. To receive the report of the Cemetery Sub-Committee Meeting held on 7th September 2017

It was **AGREED** to receive the report as a true record – Cllr Andy Gill/Cllr Angie Scott

4. Matters Arising

It was **AGREED** that all matters arising would come up during the meeting. Cllr Andy Gill advised that Watson Builders were working on the roof of the cemetery chapel as agreed during the summer and that the roller shutter on the chapel building would be serviced the following day.

It was **AGREED** that Cllr Andy Gill and Geoff Cairns would meet on-site to progress how the spoil box could be sub-divided.

5. Northumberland County Council

- The last grass cut of the season has been carried out, hopefully.
- Geoff Cairns checked the duties carried out in Edgewell Cemetery when the cemetery attendant is on holiday. He confirmed that each day the gates are opened and closed, litter is collected and the site is checked from a health and safety point of view. This is in addition to any funeral bookings and memorial installation appointments.
- There may not be someone there every day but there was on 5th, 6th, 11th and 12th October and often more than 1 person to get the jobs done.
- Assurances were given that all operatives are fully aware that trimmer cord and fuel can be sourced immediately and work should not be delayed for this reason.
- 3 men were utilized for 3 days removing the spoil from Edgewell Cemetery.

6. Complaint from Mrs Stephenson regarding 2nd memorial

The summary of the complaint is that Mrs Stephenson has been asked to remove a 2nd memorial that has been in place for 10 years as its placement makes it more difficult for the mower to maneuver and cut the grass, the result is that the grave looks unattended.

Cllr Andy Gill proposed that the memorial could be moved more towards the plinth and that this would allow the mower to drive through, presently the gap is not large enough.

It was **AGREED** that Cllr Gill would speak to Mrs Stephenson and assure that this could be carried out at no cost to her and that the memorial would be more level. Cllrs Angie Scott and Jennifer McGee were not supportive of forcing that the memorial is moved but were happy to support a compassionate approach. Cllrs Angie Scott and Jennifer McGee were not supportive of the Council refusing to maintain the area if Mrs Stephenson would not allow the memorial to be moved. It was **AGREED** that this could be referred back once Cllr Andy Gill has spoken with Mrs Stephenson.

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7. Unauthorised Items on Graves

The administrator advised that of the 43 letters sent out 3 have responded to state that they will maintain the grave themselves, 1 had already had the ornaments removed prior to the letters going out, 1 complaint has been received and 1 letter returned as not known at the address given.

The administrator advised that prior to grass-cutting season beginning in the spring, the graves should be checked again and a second letter issued if necessary.

8. Memorial Mason License Application

It was AGREED to refuse Bluebell Memorials a permit to operate in Edgewell Cemeteries for the following reasons:

- I. They installed a memorial in Edgewell Cemetery without having completed an application and without the required permission.
- II. When challenged regarding the work carried out, they denied having been in the cemetery.

It was agreed that it was clear that this particular mason had acted outside of the license and that the headstone would still be in place had there not been an error on the stone.

It was AGREED to write to Bluebell Memorials with the decision and to contact the customer to advise them of the situation and that they must seek a licensed Mason to install the headstone.

9. Memorial Checklist

The new checklist that removed the onus of compliance from the cemetery attendant and placed it with the memorial mason was approved. It was AGREED that the checklist would be sent out to all Memorial Masons with a covering letter for its immediate use and that it would be emailed to David Robson for communication with the cemetery attendant.

10. Use of cemetery chapel

The administrator described that a resident who has purchased a plot in the cemetery asked if it would be possible to use the chapel for a family-led service presided over by a humanist, if the weather was poor during a future burial. The administrator described that this was a pre-purchase and not part of any immediate arrangements but the resident was interested in possible hire of the chapel when the time comes.

It was AGREED that due to only 3 members being at the meeting, that the matter should be deferred to a future agenda.

11. Budget 2018/19

Members discussed whether the cemetery contract was considered specialised and therefore not subject to procurement rules, this had been the case in the past. David Hunt invited the Town Council to go out to tender for the work if it wished and stated that NCC did not even cover its labour costs with respect to the cemetery contract. It was discussed that if the cemetery contract did go out to tender and NCC were not successful, that TUPE may apply to the cemetery attendant as 100% of his work is based at the cemetery. David Hunt confirmed that this year the usual 3-5% would be added to the contract but that in future years it may be necessary to look at this in greater detail to ensure that NCC was able to cover labour costs.

It was AGREED that the pedestrian entrance to the old cemetery and paths needed investment and therefore £8,000 would be requested in the budget for development.